

Storybooks Help Children Learn to Read in Guinea Challenge

With an adult literacy rate of only 41%, the majority of Guineans are still unable to read or write, which has an adverse effect on the country's development, security and stability. Reading methods for teaching have never been formally taught to teachers, making it difficult for them to convey reading skills to children in the classroom.



Photo: Laura Lartigue

Guinean children learning to read using storybooks developed by USAID.

“The training we’ve received helps us learn how to get children interested in reading, and to love it. The strategies have children play games, or work in groups. It’s really wonderful to see in the classroom.”

- Aboubacar Touré, Teacher

Results

The program has been well-received by Guinean teachers, 91% of whom are now using the reading program in the classroom, and 96% of whom say they have seen improvements in student's reading abilities since the introduction of the program in 2001. The government of Guinea has also shown strong support of the reading program by agreeing to fund the reproduction of all reading materials for children in grades 1 & 2, and to test students' reading abilities at the end of grades 1 & 2. In addition, the government of Guinea will take the lead in conducting teacher training in reading instruction in 2004, support that will ensure the program's adoption and successful continuation within Guinea.

Initiative

In an effort to ensure a higher rate of literacy among Guinea's young people, USAID in-service teacher training sessions are now showing Guinea's teachers how to teach reading to children in a meaningful and engaging way.

The USAID reading instruction program, which trained nearly 15,000 educators in Guinea in 2003, encourages the creation of classroom reading materials designed to capture children's interest and imagination. Teacher's guides describing specific ways for teaching reading skills and games that will help children enjoy learning to read were also provided.

All children in grades 1 & 2 have their own set of story books to use in class, and to take home to share with friends and family. The use of storybooks designed particularly for Guinea coincides with the emergence of children's literature in Guinea; colorful children's stories that range from traditional to very contemporary African tales are appearing more and more in bookstores as the fledgling industry begins to take off.